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SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF FRONTIERS AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS:  
PROMOTING NATIONAL UNITY AMONG THE TRIBES

1. (SBU) Summary: Deputy Minister of Frontiers and Tribal Affairs Alhaj Sayeed Ahmad Haqbeen described for Poloffs the important work of his Ministry in supporting national unity and understanding. The key competencies of the Ministry of Frontier and Tribal Affairs (MFTA) are promoting the national government and its policies among tribal groups, assuring equal education and opportunity for all tribes, addressing tribal needs at the national level and resolving tribal disputes. He also mentioned the value of the tribal Arbakee militias in border regions and hoped administration of the Arbakee would return from the Ministry of Interior to the MFTA. End Summary.

2. (U) Poloffs met December 11 with Deputy Minister of Frontier and Tribal Affairs Alhaj Sayeed Ahmad Haqbeen and Political Advisor Dr. Wassim to learn more about the role of the MFTA. Haqbeen told Poloffs that the Ministry was responsible for promoting government policies and the importance of the national government through information campaigns and through their offices in tribal regions. The Ministry promotes equal education and opportunity for all tribes through education programs designed specifically for tribal groups. The MFTA also addresses tribal needs by acting as a liaison between tribal groups and government organs, and resolving tribal disputes.

#### Promoting Government Policy

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3. (U) Deputy Minister Haqbeen and Political Advisor Wasim argued that the MFTA played a very important role in Afghanistan. The MFTA claims to be the main interlocutor with tribal leaders through their offices in the provinces, and works to educate the tribes on government policies and the Afghan constitution. The Ministry is therefore important in promoting national unity as it works to sell tribal groups on the importance of Afghanistan's elected government. Political Advisor Wasim noted the GOA counternarcotics efforts as an example of a policy the MFTA is trying to explain in tribal regions. Through their outreach programs, they hope to limit through outreach programs the ability of traffickers to use migrating tribes as vehicles for drug smuggling.

#### Education and Equality

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4. (U) The Ministry works to promote equal opportunity among the tribes by improving access to education. The Ministry built a high school in Khoshandan near the Pakistani border to educate 1,600 children from Pashtun tribes that span the border. Haqbeen said President Karzai issued a Presidential decree ordering the building of schools for Kuchi's in all 34 provinces. The MFTA plans to begin work on these schools as they gain funding. Haqbeen told Poloffs that financial support is needed, but stopped short of asking for USG embassy support. They hope to complete construction of 20-30 percent of the schools by the end of 2006.

5. (U) Promoting the needs of the Kuchi nomads or working to integrate them into Afghan society is a major concern of the Ministry. Haqbeen noted that the MFTA divides the Kuchis into three categories: fully nomadic, semi-nomadic and modernized. The Ministry works to negotiate Kuchi needs with settled communities, such as securing grazing land for their animals, running medical clinics and immunizing children. The Political Advisor noted the importance the Kuchis once held for Afghanistan's economy, supplying 36 percent of its economic production. He noted the Ministry wants to help restore the Kuchi economy while moving them towards settlement and modernization.

#### Increasing Tribal Understanding

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6. (U) The MFTA seeks to increase tribal understanding through special programs and resolving disputes between tribes when they erupt in the countryside, usually through their provincial offices. The Ministry regularly conducts workshops for tribal leaders in Kabul to get them used to communicating with each other. Exchanges between tribal leaders across Afghanistan is another means of increasing inter-tribe cooperation.

## Arbakee Militias in Border Regions

17. (SBU) Haqbeen told Poloffs about the Pashtun Arbakee militias that were once funded by the MFTA. He argued that the Arbakee militias are often more effective and cheaper than ANA and ANP in the mountainous Greater Paktika region bordering Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. He pointed out that Arbakee forces are cheaper than ANA and ANP, and by employing tribal militias as security forces, the GOA can prevent them from being coopted by the Taliban or drug traffickers. The MFTA plans to propose a force of 8,800 Arbakees to President Karzai. Haqbeen also indicated that the Deputy Minister for Military Affairs managing the Arbakee should be returned to the MFTA from the Ministry of Interior. (Note: The embassy is still assessing the pros and cons of the Arbakee forces as a local complement to the ANP. In any case, they would not be a substitute for the ANA. End Note.)

Comment

18. (SBU) The Deputy Minister of Frontiers and Tribal Affairs and the Ministry's Political Advisor appeared to be trying hard to convince Poloffs of the importance of the Ministry's role. The Ministry's efforts to educate the tribal groups, resolve tribal disputes and give all tribes equal consideration are worthwhile goals. (Note: In November, President Karzai's Advisor for Tribal issues met with Charge and spoke only about the need to assist the Pashtuns. End Note.) Overall the MFTA appears to be a Ministry of increasing importance and one that can assist if not lead in promoting stability in tribal regions.

19. (SBU) The Deputy Minister's desire to see Arbakee militia responsibility returned to the MFTA is an interesting bureaucratic power play. Poloff visited a meeting in the early autumn with representatives of an NGO called the Tribal Liaison office to discuss the Arbakee militias. The Arbakee are one possible piece in the overall security puzzle, and some experts believe they can be very effective in the border regions. The MFTA probably wants to regain control of the Arbakee to increase its profile among the ministries.

NEUMANN